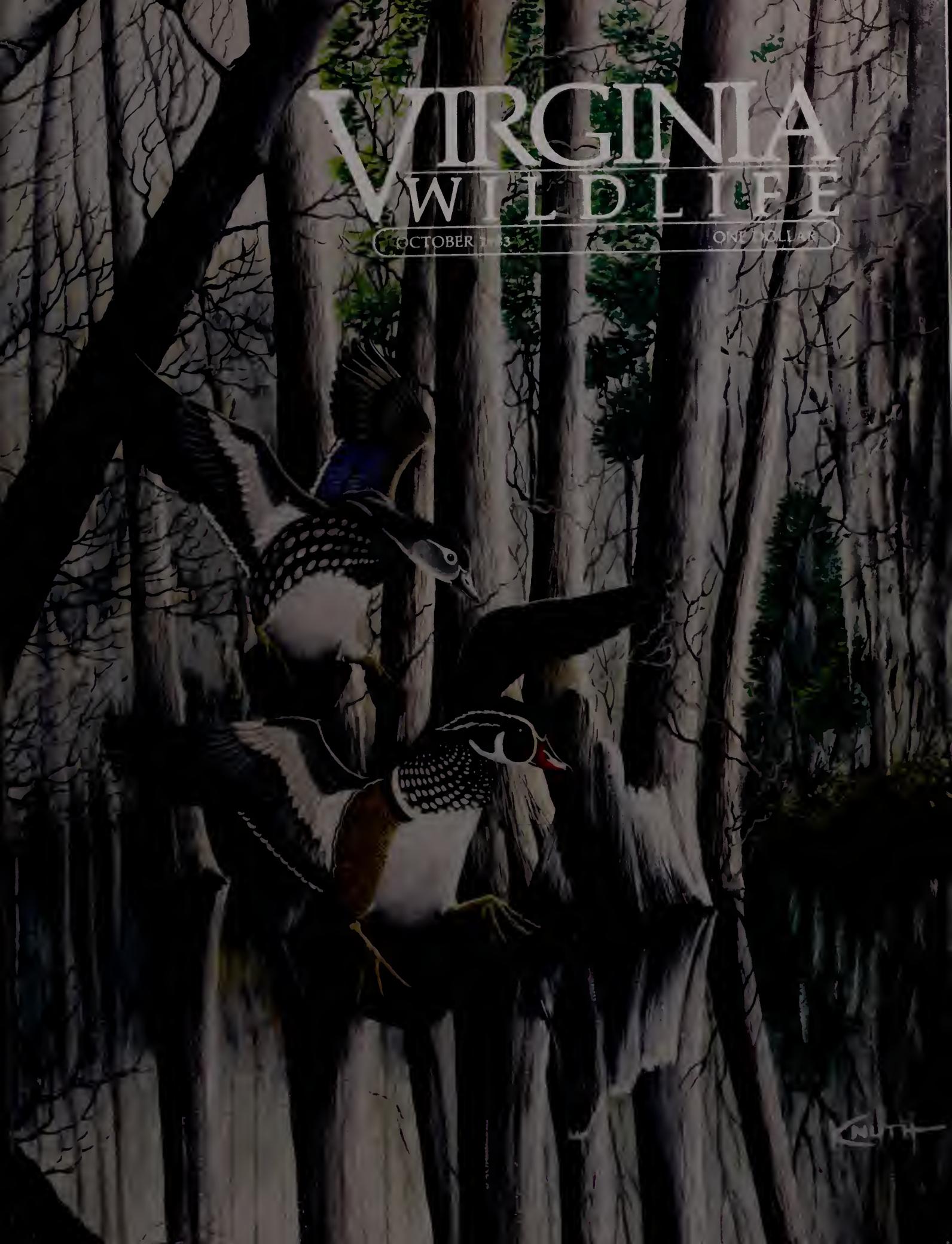


# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

OCTOBER 1983

ONE DOLLAR



# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

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Inland Fisheries

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Color separations by Lanman Dominion,  
Richmond  
Printing by the William Byrd Press,  
Richmond

*Virginia Wildlife* (ISSN 0042 6792) is published monthly  
by the Education Division of the Virginia Commis-  
sion of Game and Inland Fisheries, Box 11104, 4010  
West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104.  
Subscription rates: one year, \$5; three years, \$12.50.  
Submission guidelines for free lance work available  
upon request. The Commission accepts no respon-  
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Observations, conclusions, and opinions expressed  
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necessarily reflect those of the members or staff of  
the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources  
Volume 44, Number 10  
October 1983

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## Cover

Wood ducks by Carl "Spike" Knuth, Virginia Game Commission.  
Woodies are among the ducks you'll find if you ply the lakes and rivers west of I-95. Randall Shank tells you how on page 4.  
Back cover: Calling in ducks; painting by Jane Partin, Petersburg.

# Letters

## Kudzu Comments

I was especially pleased to read the article, *Kudzu: The Plant You Love to Hate* by William D. Weekes in the August 1983 issue.

Every spring, the Tidewater Community College Virginia Beach Campus has a magazine, "The Schrivener" published with poetry, stories and artwork by the students and this year, a student wrote a poem about the kudzu plant. I have always been fascinated by this wild growing plant along the roadsides and was pleasantly surprised to read Mr. Weekes' article stating that this seemingly ominous plant does have a good side to it.

I would like to express my thanks to all of the staff and contributors for an excellent magazine.

Marlene N. Jennerjohn  
Virginia Beach

I read with interest the article on kudzu written by William D. Weekes in your August 1983 issue of *Virginia Wildlife*. While this exotic species does have some proven benefit, I dare say, from personal experience, that the plant's liabilities far outweigh any positive points.

As past administrator of the Conservancy's natural area system, comprised of over 700 preserves throughout the United States, I fear that kudzu will one day replace Japanese honeysuckle as the scourge of the land. As Weekes points out, it is almost impossible to eradicate and its growth rate is shocking. Because of this rapid growth, no other plant, even trees, can compete with this species. I have seen kudzu completely engulf 100-year-old trees and gradually kill them off as it chokes out the light.

In a controlled environment, kudzu definitely has benefits as a source for food, clothing, paper and medicine. However, in an uncontrolled environment, which is the only place I have ever seen it grow, it is an ecological nightmare.

I have also noticed that the plant leaves much to be desired in the early spring when used for erosion control. Here in Virginia, I have seen two or three inches of hillside erode away dur-

ing spring thaws and rains. This occurs because kudzu seems to bloom later than other plants in a cool environment, therefore exposing the unprotected surface to the element at the time they need the greatest stabilization.

I for one would cast my vote for eradicating this species before it covers every piece of open land in the sunbelt. This is one case where we cannot afford to stand still for fear of being consumed (literally) by the problem.

Ray M. Culter  
Vice President  
Director of Trade Lands  
The Nature Conservancy

## About the Authors

Randall Shank of Aylett is a frequent contributor to *Virginia Wildlife*. Readers of this magazine and other outdoor publications are familiar with Jack Randolph's byline; he is the assistant executive director of the Game Commission and an avid outdoorsman and writer. Janet Shaffer is a freelance writer and photographer living in Lynchburg; her husband "Kit" has also written for *Virginia Wildlife*. John Fulton is a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Curtis Badger's most recent contribution to *Virginia Wildlife* appeared in the July 1983 issue, "The Subtle Thrills of Flatwater Canoeing." The freelancer and former newspaperman lives on the Eastern Shore. Harry Murray of Edinburg is becoming a regular contributor to *Virginia Wildlife* with his fishing articles. Game warden Lt. John Heslep lives in Rocky Mount. His articles and photos appear often in the magazine. "Bird of the Month" fans will notice that John W. Taylor has rejoined *Virginia Wildlife*; he and the Game Commission's own "Spike" Knuth will alternate on that page from now on. Mr. Taylor, of Edgewater, Maryland, a widely respected artist, contributed the text and painting for the "Bird of the Month" feature for many years before

Mr. Knuth assumed responsibility for it in 1980. We're pleased to have Mr. Taylor with us again.



## A Record?

We've never taken a poll, but we suspect that one-year-old Catherine Elizabeth Curry is *Virginia Wildlife's* youngest "reader." She is the granddaughter of information officer and *Virginia Wildlife* staffer "Curly" Satterlee (who took this photo). She's shown here with her mother, Nancy Satterlee Curry at their home in Jacksonville, Florida.



by Randall Shank

# Freelance For Ducks

Hunters in the central and western regions of the state don't have to worry about waterfowl blinds; just find a body of water, get permission to hunt, and go.

**F**inding a place to hunt ducks in Virginia can be a frustrating endeavor. Laws governing duck hunters vary according to different geographical locations within the state. Virginia migratory waterfowl regulations require that blinds be licensed if shot from over public waters except on or along the shores of any river, stream or impoundment west of I-95. In eastern Virginia there are some exceptions to this rule, but for the average duck hunter in the central and western part of the state, the above statement frees him to pursue waterfowl with fewer restrictions than his counterpart who hunts closer to Virginia's shoreline.

West of I-95, the waterfowl hunter can fill his gamebag by freelancing for ducks. Ownership of land on a major watercourse, having the "rights" to a blind that has been in the family for years, or knowing someone who has a duck blind permit are not prerequisites for the duck hunter in western Virginia. Like the pursuit of other game, the hunter need only get the required permit to hunt on public land, and the permission from the landowner to hunt on private land. With these preliminaries out of the way, the duck enthusiast is ready to go hunting.

The first step in finding a promising location to hunt west of I-95 is to find large bodies of water. Smith Mountain Lake, Leesville Lake, Bugs Island and Lake Anna are just a few of the large impoundments that attract ducks. Both divers and surface feeding ducks will hang out in the overall general area around these large lakes. Surface feeders will be the predominant species found.

Mallards, black ducks, wood ducks and teal will leave the relative safety of open water and venture to favorite food sources during the day. Grain fields that have been cut over, and shallow water where tender tubers from aquatic plants are available, provide excellent food sites for ducks.



Michael Gadomski

(Left) Setting decoys in an open area where the ducks can see them from a distance will usually bring them in. Surface feeders like mallards (above), black ducks, wood ducks and teal will leave the relative safety of open water and venture to favorite food sources during the day.

These smaller bodies of water include ponds, rivers and swamps.

To locate these daytime hotspots, scouting before the hunt is essential. Be at likely duck hunting spots in the early morning and in the evening when the ducks are moving. In many instances the ducks will be moving to and from the larger impoundments. If adequate food and cover can be found on the big body of water, the ducks may stay there. Setting some decoys in a cove or in an open area where they can be seen from a great distance can often bring in a good number of ducks.

The only way to find a productive location is to hunt for one. Visit farmers and other landowners and find out if and where they have been seeing any ducks. If they have, get permission to hunt. Farm ponds often hold large numbers of migrating ducks during certain times of the season. In western Virginia the average hunter does not go after ducks and for many, it is not considered a gamebird. A farm boy who would rather milk cows every Saturday for a month than reveal a secret hickory grove full of squirrels, tipped me off on a pond being used as a rest area by mallards and black ducks. The thought of hunting those ducks never occurred to him. With my prodding, he later became a duck fanatic.

Another productive method for finding waterfowl is by floating rivers and streams. Choose rivers near large bodies of water, if possible. The New River near Claytor Lake and the James River near Lake Moomaw are good examples, but there are others. Start by obtaining the county highway maps from the State Highway office in your locale. These maps not only indicate all county roads, but major streams as well. Where county roads cross rivers, the floating duck hunter can find access points to and from the stream he decides to float.

If a large concentration of ducks can be found using a grain field near the river or on some stretch of the river, then the next step would be to contact the landowner to obtain permission to hunt from land and perhaps set out a few decoys. Otherwise the hunter is limited to jumpshooting from the boat.

River hunting is probably the best way to begin hunting for ducks in the western areas of the Commonwealth. While jumpshooting for mallards, black ducks and wood ducks, the hunter can at the same time notice farming patterns along the stream banks. Flight patterns of local ducks in the area can also be discovered and understood.

As cold weather sets in, many of the smaller ponds and sometimes the large bodies of water will freeze. Immediately, the ducks head to the rivers looking for open water. When this combination of weather-caused events occurs, a bonanza of waterfowl hunting can take place.

One such river provided a full season of excellent hunting for a friend of mine during the cold winter of 1980. Early in the season he discovered a large concentration of mallards feeding in a grain field and using the adjacent river as a resting area. Since it was accessible only by boat and with the landowner's permission, he enjoyed several Saturdays of good hunting. As the season progressed, area reservoirs began to freeze, and more ducks were attracted to the open water on the river.

Another location to pursue waterfowl is in a swamp that

is found in a low lying area, either occurring naturally, or through the industrious work of beavers. The beaver is on the increase in Virginia and its dam building generates an ideal habitat for nesting wood ducks. These acorn eaters are lured to the mast-bearing hardwoods of the forest and will utilize flooded timberland. The best luck can be had early in the season before the "woodies" head south.

Many areas in the national forests and corporate timberlands hold beaver colonies and, in turn, attract wood ducks. My favorite grouse covert on some corporate timberland also holds a small population of beavers that have provided a suitable home for some wood ducks. Hunting the ponds early in the morning I usually get a shot at a wood duck or two. Later in the day I hunt for grouse.

Whereas the eastern Virginia wildfowler is almost forced to hunt in the same blind on all of his ducks hunts, the duck hunter in the west has to move around to "hot" duck hunting spots as the season progresses. Ponds will be the first bodies of water to freeze as the winter weather gets colder. One such pothole was home for a bunch of mallards and black ducks each evening in December. That season at dusk we could depend on a few shots before dark on each day that we hunted the pond. Abruptly the weather turned cold and the pond froze. Just as abruptly the ducks left and never returned. We moved to other areas.

The rivers remained open and by hunting these streams we discovered that flight and feeding patterns can be the key to a successful hunt. Stationed on an island in a local river, we enjoyed excellent pass shooting as flocks flew down the river at dawn and back up the stream at sunset. Where the ducks were going we did not know, but we did know that they would fly up and down the river like clockwork.

Hunting ducks means work. A long walk on a lakeshore or through a swamp with a bag full of decoys and a heavy shotgun at 5:00 a.m. can be a real challenge. In order to reap the reward from this effort, the duck hunter needs to be properly equipped to hunt a given area. A boat and/or a good retrieving dog are almost must-haves. When shooting over decoys on a large body of water, a boat is needed to set the decoys. Fallen ducks can then be retrieved with the boat or by a dog.

Jumpshooting on rivers requires the use of a john boat or canoe. Small, fast-flowing streams are the best to hunt on, and a boat that is easily handled works well. Hunting in pairs is the norm, with one person guiding the boat and the other shooting up front. After each shot the paddler and the shooter switch places.

When hunting beaver swamps and farm ponds, a pair of waders will suffice, although an eager Labrador retriever will make the outing more enjoyable. If you are caught hunting ducks without a boat, waders or dog, then take your fishing rod with a large bass plug on the end of the line (and your fishing license). An accurate cast can retrieve a duck lying in the water if all else fails.

No duck blind permits and no long tradition of holding the rights to a blind exist for the western Virginia duck hunter. By floating rivers, riding back roads, watching flight patterns and visiting with landowners, the wildfowler can pave the way to a successful hunt. With persistent hard work around lakes, ponds, swamps and streams, freelancing for ducks can pay off. □

# Birds of Pray

Praying is what you'll be doing in the hunting field this fall, if you haven't planned your hunt with safety in mind.

by Jack Randolph

illustrations by Martin Rhodes



No, the title of this story does not contain a typographical error. The correct term is *pray*, not *prey*, because when I'm in a dove field and a low flying dove comes whistling down the field, I pray that some idiot doesn't take a shot at it. If the bird heads in my direction, I quit praying and hit the dirt. I have a stong sense of self-preservation.

A low-flying dove and an over-anxious hunter make a deadly combination. This situation is often aided and abetted by a well-meaning hunt master who packs more hunters into a field than the traffic can bear safely.

Fired at the proper angle, a little number 9 shot can travel 225 yards. Larger shot, such as 7½'s and 8's which are commonly used in dove hunting, carry further. Yet, you can frequently find dove hunters spaced less than 50 yards apart.

A group of experienced hunters could safely hunt spaced at hundred-yard intervals. But how often are all the shooters on a dove hunt experienced? For that matter, how often have you hunted doves when you actually were familiar with all of the hunters in the field?

A shot shower, shot dropping from shells fired at a safe high angle, is common on a dove field and is of no particular consequence. It's those shots fired slightly above or on the horizontal that cause trouble.

We generally assume that everyone in a dove field is firing low brass light loads

with shot sizes 7½ or smaller. Having worked in sporting goods stores, however, I have been amazed at the variety of loads used on doves. Some believe they need high velocity loads for the lil' critters. Others will literally take any shells available. More than a few neophytes are out there with anything from fours to sixes because they "had some around the house."

Another thing that can give a dove hunter the "willies" is the hot shot Charlie who sees you getting some shooting. So, he leaves his stand, wanders in and plops his dove stool in the field about 50 yards in front of you. This is sort of like the guy who starts fishing over your shoulder when you're catching fish. Not only is it rude, it's downright dangerous.

Some rules for ensuring safety on a dove hunt are:

1. Allow only low brass shells loaded with size 7½ shot or smaller.
2. Space hunters on stands at least 100 yards apart
3. Avoid positioning hunters directly opposite each other.
4. Require hunters to stay on stands.
5. Advise all hunters not to shoot at any low flying doves and to be very careful when pursuing cripples.

While fatalities seldom result from being struck by small shot at medium range, some grievous injuries—including blinding—are possible. I'll never forget an incident that occurred when I was a boy: a young squirrel hunter permanently blinded his daddy by shooting at a squirrel that was head-high on the trunk of a tree between the two.

It is surprising how often squirrel hunts produce hunting accidents. Often they involve close friends or relatives and result from the hunters' not keeping track of each other in the forests. They frequently involve inexperienced hunters who become very excited when they see game.

There is no game in the woods worth risking an accident, nor is there any experience worse than being involved in an accident.

Two recent deer hunting experiences have caused me to be more than a little apprehensive.

I should have had a clue as I was lead to my stand in the predawn gray of the morning. The guy leading me had a 44 magnum on his hip, a 30-06 over one shoulder and a shotgun over the other. I

wondered if we were going to defend the area rather than hunt it.

He placed me on my stand and left. As the morning grew lighter I saw something move to my left. It was another hunter, just 45 yards away and he was armed with a scope-sighted rifle. I looked to my right and saw his twin, both of them in easy range of the shotgun I was carrying. And there I was without any thing to dig a foxhole. If a deer came our way I was certain that the woods would be full of flying lead from both seen and unseen hunters. Certainly we were spaced much too closely.

## "And there I was without anything to dig a foxhole."

On another day, in another area, I was on a stand when someone fired at a deer behind me. I could hear the buckshot scream by within a foot of my head. Later, I learned that there were stands located *behind* stands. Good grief!

A dose of 00 buckshot travels about 610 yards, which is just a bit shy of the extreme range of a rifled slug. Because rifles and shotguns fire so far, it is nearly impossible to space hunters out of range of each other. It is possible, however, to use terrain features to ensure that they are not in line with each other.

When laying out stands for a deer hunt, make every effort to make safety automatic, not totally dependent on the actions of the hunters. For example, two hunters spaced 100 yards apart on a straight road in view of each other is an accident just waiting to happen. If one were placed off the road 20 yards into the woods and the other off the road 40 yards into the woods, the chances of an accident are greatly reduced.

Elevated stands help reduce accidents, particularly if they are not in line. The use of hollows and ridges between hunters puts up physical barriers that prevent hunters on stands from shooting each other. Remember some rules for a safe deer hunt:

1. Load guns only when on stand.
2. Unload guns before leaving stand.
3. Do not leave stand until end of hunt when picked up.

4. All hunters wear blaze orange hats and blaze orange on front and back of jacket.

Of course, these rules are in addition to the usual safe gun handling rules all sportsmen should observe.

Deer hunts in which the deer are driven by other hunters require additional safety considerations. In addition to spacing the standers safely, the hunt master is faced with the problem of ensuring that standers don't shoot drivers and visa versa. Quite frankly, permitting the drivers to shoot is often risky business because they often don't know the location of other drivers or the standers. I would prefer that drivers not shoot on hunts.

Losing drivers is another problem. To keep drivers from becoming lost, a briefing with a topo map before the drive is useful, if they are not familiar with the country. By placing those most familiar with the area on the flanks, you can prevent losing people. Perhaps the best trick is to require each one to carry a compass and provide each with a compass bearing before the drive. Drivers should always wear blaze orange garments.

Safety on a hunt means preventing shooting accidents. It means preventing folks from getting lost or injured on the hunt. It also means protecting older or weak hunters from over-exertion. It requires planning.

Every group or club should develop a safety plan for its hunt. Stands must be intelligently placed. A refresher course in hunting safety is always in order. Members of the group on medication should be screened to be sure they are fit to hunt and any special needs should be known to the group. The club should know where and how to obtain first aid service and the location and route to the nearest hospital. Older hunters should have a physical check-up, including an eye examination, before the season. Signals should be pre-arranged to help hunters in distress.

Safety is the result of thorough planning and careful execution. It is no accident. □

Want to learn more? Enroll in a hunter safety course. Call or write the safety officer, Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230, 804/257-1000; or contact your local game warden.





by Janet Shaffer

# Celebration of Autumn

*Virginia apples, Brunswick stew  
and fall foliage add up to  
a day to remember.*



**O**ctober arrives in Virginia with a crescendo of color. The greens of summer are transformed into patterns of bronze and sienna, cinnabar and copper, flashes of Indian yellow, burnt ochre and umber, rust and tangerine, the work of a consummate artist of nature wandering the hills and valleys, and banishing the last strongholds of September.

When the color is at its height and apple orchards await the harvest, it is cidering time in the Old Dominion.

It is also time to brew great pots of Brunswick stew, preferably outdoors, and invite friends, relatives and neighbors for fellowship and feasting.





Robin Schroeder



Helen Inge



Janet Shaffer



Janet Shaffer



Janet Shaffer photos

The tried and true recipe below will feed approximately 70 to 80 people; a family-sized version follows. Amounts of the various ingredients can be changed, deleted altogether, or other ingredients added; in Colonial Williamsburg, for example, they add okra to the recipe.

### Celebration-Size Recipe

- 35 fryers (or enough to produce 27 to 28 pounds of meat which may include squirrel or rabbit)
- 2 lb. butter
- 3 gal. tomatoes, canned or fresh
- 3 gal. butterbeans, canned or fresh
- 2 gal. corn (some prefer white corn)
- 13 lb. potatoes
- 13 lb. onions
- 8 oz. black pepper & 1/2 oz. red pepper
- 2 or more oz. salt

### Family-Size Recipe

- 3 lb. chicken, squirrel, or a preferred meat
- 1 small onion
- 2 qt. tomatoes, fresh or canned
- 1 qt. drained butterbeans
- 1 qt. whole kernel corn
- 3 medium Irish potatoes
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 5 tbsp. sugar (optional)
- salt, red and black pepper to taste

Instructions for both recipes: Cook meat and one of the onions (the small onion for family-size) in water (about a quart for the family size; three gallons or enough to cover the meat for the larger size) and simmer until meat loosens from bones. Cut into pieces, discard bone, and add salt and pepper.

Add the vegetables. Stir often while mixture comes to a boil, then cover over low heat and simmer. During the next three to five hours, stir occasionally to prevent sticking. The family-size recipe will make approximately six quarts of stew; it can be frozen.

### Cole Slaw

|                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1/2 head of cabbage, chopped | 1/2 cup mayonnaise |
| 1 chopped apple              | celery seed        |
| 1 tbsp. sugar                | salt and pepper    |
| 2 tbsp. vinegar              |                    |

Combine last five ingredients; toss cabbage and apple in mixture until evenly coated.

Brunswick county and Virginia apple country are at opposite corners of the state, but one's stew and the other's cider make a perfect marriage. (Page 10, large photo) Brunswick stew is a hearty blend of vegetables—corn, tomatoes, onions, potatoes and butterbeans—and meat; game such as squirrel or rabbit is traditional, but chicken is more often the choice of the modern cook. (Page 11, top and bottom) Fall's most popular treat, apples. (Page 11, center and this page, bottom photo) Pressing apples to make cider. (This page, top photo) Brunswick stew, whether you're making it for a crowd or your family, is best when it's simmered and stirred for several hours.

If it has been a "good fruit year" and apples are abundant, cider makes the perfect beverage for almost any sort of entertaining (or family meals), and is especially compatible with hot, hearty Brunswick stew. An old cider press which can be borrowed, or bought at a flea market or country sale, adds an old-fashioned, down-home informality with a mystique of its own.

One bushel of uncut apples will make approximately 2½ gallons of cider. Old-timers will tell you that among the best apples are cannons and yellow pippins, but other varieties can be used, especially juicy strains.

At an apple cidering fest last autumn high in the reaches of Onion Mountain in beautiful Bedford County, guests took turns cranking the press wheel which crushes and grinds the apples by way of a stripper. The pulp then drops into a wooden bucket with slotted sides and amber apple juice pours from the "squeezins." Others refilled the hopper with quantities of apples and supervised funneling the cider into pitchers, mason jars, or bottles, in preparation for the partaking to come.

The fragrance of bubbling stew wafted through the air as we alternated paddle-stirring the thick concoction of meat and vegetables which simmered and smoked in a 35-gallon iron kettle suspended over an open fire. Perhaps the sheer novelty of returning to early American folkways accounted for the willing workers. Or, was it perhaps the bracing mountain air that generated energy? Many of the guests had traveled to the haven to escape pollution, crowds and the concrete of towns and cities, and thus could appreciate the quality of air and the sense of freedom.

**G**etting to know new people is half the fun of such a gathering. Differences in background and life-style blend, and amicable friendships are quickly struck up among acquaintances and strangers alike.

Finally, when the Brunswick stew had reached a prime state of readiness and there was ample cider to accompany the home-made slaw, hot breads, and an assortment of desserts (contributed voluntarily by invited guests), we filled our plates to overflowing with ladels of steaming stew and its accompaniments. All were culinary triumphs and the smooth, yet tart bite of the cider made seconds and thirds an anticipated pleasure.

The original Brunswick stew originated in that county around 1828, but at that time was called "Matthews Stew," according to "Virginia—Guide to the Old Dominion," which was compiled for the Writers Program of the Work Projects Administration around 1940. The story goes that one James Matthews (or "Uncle Jimmy" as he was known) worked for Dr. Creed Haskins on his plantation in Brunswick County. A passable cook, Matthews usually went along with Dr. Haskins and his friends on hunting expeditions as the camp chef. One day he decided to have a pot-luck type repast ready for the hungry hunters, and tossed

a mixture of meat and a few vegetables in a pot which he stirred over a slow fire.

**A**ccording to the still-existing WPA account, the half-starved men approved heartily of his "experimental" stew and it became a staple for outdoor cooking. The recipe changed during the years with the addition of a greater variety of vegetables and meats other than squirrel.

Eventually the dish appeared on menus at political get-togethers in the county and then throughout Virginia wherever politicians and voters congregated. With such popular endorsement, "Matthews Stew" came into its own as the Brunswick stew (more or less) that we know today.

It is widely served as a complete meal at picnics and family gatherings of any sort where large groups must be fed. Sometimes only bread, home-made or store-bought, accompanies the dish, but more often it is reinforced with great bowls of slaw and other side dishes. While its flavor does not appeal to every palate, it remains popular with a wide spectrum of people of all ages and from every income group.

Not a meal for large groups only, Brunswick stew is a national dish which may be served at home while entertaining a few guests or simply for a family meal, particularly on a cold day when a hearty stew is most appetizing, even a cheering encouragement to the human spirit.

To prepare for your own Brunswick stew fest, with or without the cider, a few minor decisions must be made. While squirrel has long been the traditional meat used as a base for the stew, today's cooks lean toward chicken, both for its availability, ease of preparation, and yes, flavor. It can be boiled tender, boned and cut into pieces before adding to the other ingredients, either in your kitchen or outdoors in the iron kettle. Some more traditional cooks like to combine squirrel or rabbit with chicken, and, depending on whether or not you prefer an addition of fat in the mixture, you can also combine the other meats with bacon, salt pork, or other "white meats" which are usually ground and added raw. Others relish a splash of brandy or other spirits for the tangy taste, and still others stir in a quantity of bread crumbs for thickening and full-bodied goodness. However, most Brunswick stew makers tend to prefer a wholesome "straight" stew, relying on the combination of meat and a skillfull blending of vegetables as the means to a delicious end.

Though October is an ideal month for a Brunswick stew "banquet," whether accompanied by cider or not, almost any time is a good time to plan your own celebration. The important thing is getting together with some of your favorite people of assorted ages and inclinations and enjoying the great outdoors. After the feast, it's fun to swap stories and conversation around a bonfire, breathe in the wine of country air, and watch the stars appear as the moon rides high above the hills and valleys of Virginia. □



Gregg Hennemuth



Leonard Lee Rue III



John R. Fulton



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

# Kerr Reservoir: Unexplored Territory

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is managing these government lands to be attractive to wildlife; they are succeeding, and now they want to attract some other species—hunters and outdoor recreationists.



(Opposite page, clockwise from top left) The Corps of Engineers has erected nesting boxes for gray squirrels in young oak-hickory stands. Upland game bird hunting is one of the many possibilities on the WMA's. Power line rights-of-way are managed for quail and other wildlife species. The Corps has established a system of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) on the lands surrounding Kerr Reservoir. (This page, top) Beaver ponds provide excellent habitat for wood ducks as well as beaver, otter and mink. (Above) Citizens may purchase firewood cutting permits, thereby helping to thin hardwood stands on these areas.

Fifty-thousand acres of prime hunting lands, virtually unexplored by Virginia sportsmen! Sound fantastic? It is real. The lands surrounding John H. Kerr Reservoir are being developed to enhance wildlife habitat and public access.

Kerr Reservoir is located on the Roanoke River straddling the Virginia-North Carolina state line. It is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control, hydro-electric power, recreation and fish and wildlife. Kerr Reservoir is a unique unit of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' nationwide system of water resource projects: substantial upland tracts of land are included within its boundaries, due to the large flood storage capacity—20 vertical feet. This has facilitated the preservation and management of numerous acres of good quality game habitat.

A system of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) is being developed as a focus for intensive wildlife management efforts. These areas are managed for various game

and non-game species and range from 125 to nearly 1,000 acres.

WMA's are selected for their diversity and quality of wildlife habitat. In most areas, an interconnecting system of trails provides access to numerous forest openings. These openings are frequented by a variety of wildlife.

**P**ublic hunting is permitted on the WMA's, and hunters will find ample opportunity to test their skills. A great variety of game can be found on Reservoir lands, including whitetail deer, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, grey squirrel, mourning dove and cottontail rabbit. Waterfowl species include wood duck, mallard and black duck. Furbearers in the area are beaver, otter, mink, raccoon and grey and red fox.

No additional permits or stamps are necessary to hunt here (except permits for temporary waterfowl blinds; there are no permanent blinds at Kerr Reservoir). State hunting laws apply to all reservoir lands—but be sure you know which state you're in! Three quarters of the land is in Virginia, the remainder in North Carolina. Be sure you have the proper license for the state in which you hunt, and that you are aware of the game regulations in each state.

Each wildlife management area is marked with a sign on a public road. Parking areas, roads, and trails provide public access. Although all but two of the areas are accessible by vehicle, foot traffic is encouraged. A map of all WMA's—with notations regarding the featured species of game managed in each area—is published in a guide which is available from the Resource Manager. To request a copy of *J.H. Kerr Reservoir Hunting Guide*, write to: Resource Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, John H. Kerr Reservoir, Route 1, Box 76, Boydton, Virginia 23917. Also available is *Birds of Kerr Reservoir*.

Forest openings are established in WMA's by bulldozing beetle-kill areas, pine harvest areas, and old fields. These openings are then planted to ladino clover to provide forage for deer, brood cover for quail, and the edge effect desired by a number of songbirds and other game and non-game species.

Timber harvesting is the most effective wildlife management technique, however. Since the last outbreak of southern pine bark beetle in 1973-76, concerted efforts have been made to thin all pine stands to increase the vigor of residual stands to withstand another beetle attack. Heavy thinning of pine also encourages the growth of browse trees and shrubs, thus increasing the use of pine stands by whitetail deer.

Hardwood stands are marked for thinning and permits sold to private individuals for cutting firewood. A somewhat smaller operation than the pine thinning, this has become very popular with area residents, some of whom depend on the Corps for their winter wood supply. By removing suppressed trees in hardwood stands, mast production is increased, providing a larger food source for many forest-dwelling species. Understory trees such as flowering dogwood, persimmon, blackgum, viburnums and holly are favored because they provide the "soft mast" desired by many birds and mammals.

Many creeks and rivers emptying into Kerr Reservoir are dammed with active beaver ponds ranging from one acre to over 100 acres in size. These are some of the richest ecological areas on the project, providing habitat for a multitude of species including birds, waterfowl, mammals and fish. The most dynamic inhabitant is, of course, the beaver. This industrious fellow is greatly expanding his

range throughout the Piedmont, to the delight of some and much to the chagrin of others. The beaver is the only creature besides man with the ability to drastically change his environment to suit his needs. Fortunately, the beaver plays host to many other critters who find his ponds and meadows quite suitable for their own habitats. Large concentrations of woodpeckers feed on insects found in the trees killed by flooded water. An animal making a recovery with the beaver is the otter. This sleek and playful member of the weasel family is seldom seen, but signs of his presence, including slides and scats, can be seen in almost every beaver pond.

The most colorful inhabitant of the beaver ponds, however, is the wood duck. Woodies find the quiet, secluded waters just right for raising families. Dead trees provide excellent nesting cavities. However, these old snags are very susceptible to windfall, and natural nesting cavities are becoming scarce. In an effort to replace natural nesting cavities, the Corps is erecting artificial nesting structures on live trees surrounding several beaver ponds. Some ponds are drained in late summer, and the mudflats are planted to Japanese millet to provide a food source for fall migrating ducks.

The bobwhite quail is one of the most popular game species at Kerr Reservoir. Numerous old fields and house sites are being kept open to preserve coverts of this beautiful bird. Small food plots are planted on power lines, in forest openings, and in agricultural leased areas to provide a reliable food source for quail. Other areas are plowed and disked to encourage the growth of weeds, the seeds of which are relished by quail and many songbird species.

There are approximately 50 miles of utility right-of-way corridors on reservoir lands. These rights-of-way average 300 feet wide and some stretch for several miles on government lands. Power transmission lines are mowed once every three years, thus developing into a shrub cover. Natural gas pipelines are mowed every year, developing into a grass cover. These areas provide numerous acres of browse, forage and soft mast food sources, as well as the edge effect desired by many game and non-game species. These rights-of-way provide public access for hunting, hiking or nature study.

**K**err Reservoir supports a variety of bird life. Several species of long-legged wading birds are found in coves and backwater creeks. Although the reservoir is not located on a major flyway, many species of waterfowl stop over on their way south, finding shelter on the main body of water and feeding in coves and beaver ponds. The diversity of forest cover also supports a great variety of songbirds. The spring warbler migration is particularly exciting, with at least 30 species moving through the area. The most majestic bird found here is the bald eagle, which is attracted to the lake by the solitude and ample numbers of fish. An annotated list of the birds of Kerr Reservoir is available from the Resource Manager's Office.

Hunters and other off-season recreationists can find a campsite year-round at many of the Corps of Engineers campgrounds. Although portions of campgrounds may be closed after September, a number of campsites are kept open throughout the fall and winter months, free of charge.

So whether you come to hunt or simply to enjoy the many game and non-game animals present here, why not pay Kerr Reservoir a visit this fall? □

# Nathan Cobb's Island



Courtesy of Eastern Shore of Virginia Historical Society

Story and photos by  
Curtis J. Badger

**C**obb's is a sandy finger of an island, a narrow strip of beach, cordgrass, and marsh elder that fronts the Atlantic Ocean along Virginia's Eastern Shore. As islands go, Cobb's is an unpretentious place. It is flat and open with very little high ground and none of the ancient pine forests that grace other barrier islands such as Pocomoke and Assateague. The beach is smooth with a gentle berm that drops slowly toward the ocean. On its small dunes grow thickets of twisted elder and dwarfed cedar trees whose limbs and trunks have been wrenched by Atlantic storms. On the leeward side of the island is Easter Marsh and the Intracoastal Waterway, the inland passage that is protected from the ravages of the ocean by these barrier islands.



*The colorful history of one of Virginia's Barrier Islands, and the man whose name identifies it.*





(Above) a view of the old station from the new station, and (left) the new station from the old.

Cobb's Island is a wonderful wild place, where the only imprints of civilization are the flotsam from passing ships and the two derelict lifesaving stations that stand like huge grey ghosts on the island's southern tip.

But this island has a history. A century ago it was a playground for America's business and political leaders. They

(Page 17, top photo) one of Nathan Cobb's several enterprises, the Cobb's Island Hotel; (page 17, bottom photo) the island's two abandoned Coast Guard stations—the "old" (circa 1870) and the "new" (circa 1900). (This page, top) "Cobb's is a sandy finger of an island, a narrow strip of beach, cordgrass, and marsh elder."

came from all over the country to swim in the ocean and fish in Cobb's Bay, to shoot waterfowl in the island's salt-marshes and to wine and dine with friends on salty seaside oysters, blue crabs and fresh sea trout. There was a hotel here a century ago, a resort that was like none other in its time. It was built by a Massachusetts man of unlimited imagination and indomitable spirit. His name was Nathan Cobb.

Cobb was a shipbuilder in Cape Cod in the early 1830's, happily building whaling ships with his father and brothers. But in 1833, at age 36, a tragic incident changed his life. His wife Nancy Doane had been ill for some time, and doctors discovered that she had developed tuberculosis. The prognosis was not good, but her family physician recommended that a move to a warmer climate might prolong her life. So Nathan and Nancy and

their three young sons sold their share of the business, loaded their belongings on a schooner, and set sail for more southerly latitudes.

The Cobbs apparently had no definite destination in mind, but when a storm off the Virginia Capes forced their schooner into an inlet near the town of Oyster on Virginia's Eastern Shore, the family decided to stay. Neighbors received them warmly and helped them build a small house, and Nathan opened a store in the town. The Cobbs lived in Oyster for five years, and Nancy's health seemed to improve. The boys—Nathan, Jr., Warren and Albert—grew strong and enjoyed fishing and exploring in the nearby creeks and bays. The store prospered, but Nathan began to tire of life as a merchant, and as he would stock the shelves in his small store his mind would wander to the sandy beaches and the wild, open expanses of the barrier islands east of Oyster. Fronting the islands and lining the narrow inlets were dangerous shoals that had claimed many vessels during heavy storms, and Cobb reasoned that if he could establish a base on one of the islands, he could set up a profitable salvage business reclaiming ships and cargoes from the Atlantic surf.

Cobb, a shrewd businessman, weighed the pros and cons of the idea for months, meanwhile growing all the more bored with the confining life of a shopkeeper. Finally, in March 1839, Nathan decided to make the move.

Great Sand Shoal Island was a long, narrow band of beach and saltmarsh that fronted the ocean for six miles. It had no lighthouse or lifesaving station at that time, and its dangerous shoals had claimed numerous commercial vessels during the Cobbs' five-year tenure in Oyster. And the island was for sale.

Great Sand Shoal had been granted to Andrew Fabin and William Satchel by the provincial governor of Virginia in 1734 and had been owned by descendants of the Fabin family since. But the family had no plans for the island and apparently did not value it highly. William and Elizabeth Firchett, descendants of Fabin, sold the island to Nathan on March 11, 1839 for \$150 and 50 bushels of salt. Nathan quickly disposed of the business in Oyster and moved Nancy and the boys to the island, where they built a modest house and began their salvage business. The island soon became known as Cobb's.

Nathan's salvage business got off to a brisk start as spring storms buffeted sailing ships off the Virginia coast. His first salvage operation came soon after the family moved to the island. The schooner



*Columbia*, sailing from Charleston, South Carolina to Baltimore with a load of lumber, became disabled in high seas off the coast and was blown onto the shoals of Cobb's Island. Nathan and his sons saved the six men and captain's wife who were aboard the ship, then salvaged the stricken vessel and its cargo for a percentage of the property on board.

Until a lifesaving station was opened on Cobb's Island in the 1870's, Nathan and his family saved dozens of lives and salvaged many stricken ships. The men used a Cape Cod fishing boat as their lifesaving craft. And with anchors, hawsers, block and tackle, horses and sails they would coax stranded ships off the shoals an inch at a time. It was difficult, often dangerous work, and Nathan and his sons often risked their lives to

(Left and below) The "new" coast guard lifesaving station was abandoned in the 1960's; a visit today yields these romantic, ghostly images. (Opposite page) The old station has been steadily sinking into the sand over the years.

reclaim ships and crews from an angry ocean.

The Cobbs never charged a fee for saving the lives of crew members, but Nathan was known as a shrewd Yankee bargainer when it came to negotiating salvage settlements. Records of some of Cobb's transactions show that in March 1870, Hugh Jenkins and Company of Baltimore agreed to pay the Cobbs 35 percent of all cargo aboard the bark *Cricket* as a salvage fee. Later that year, the schooner *Harry Lee* fell victim to Cobb's shoals, and an agreement between the Cobbs and Edmond Barrett of Philadelphia, owner of the schooner, gave the Cobbs 60 percent of the value of the cargo and 40 percent of the value of the vessel and its hardware.

Nancy Doane lived only a year after the move to the island. She was buried in 1840 in the island cemetery where Nathan would later be put to rest. A few years later Nathan married Esther Carpenter, and his three sons soon brought wives to the island. The four families seem to have gotten along well, and they expanded their business interests to harvesting seafood and, in the fall, market gunning.

In the years prior to the passage of game laws, ducks, geese and shorebirds were looked upon as a valuable market commodity, and, as in other business ventures, Nathan and the Cobb brothers soon became very proficient. During the fall migrations, the Cobbs claimed to

have killed about 150 birds a day. The families would clean the game at night, and in the morning one of the boys would go out to the inlet, hail a passing northbound vessel, and ship the birds to markets in Baltimore and New York. Quality ducks such as blacks and canvasbacks sold for 50 cents each in the northern markets.

The Cobbs' market gunning business spawned yet another enterprise for the islanders. When northern sportsmen learned of the quantity of waterfowl and shorebirds on the island, the Cobbs became inundated with requests for accommodations during the hunting season. So Nathan, never one to turn his back on a business opportunity, decided to build a hotel. Its success was immediate, and the original frame hotel was soon joined by a clubhouse, guest cottages, a bowling alley, and quarters for a growing battery of domestic employees. Although the hotel began as an accommodation for hunters, it soon catered to year-round visitors; the Cobbs could accommodate more than 100 guests, as well as the approximately 50 people who were permanent residents of the island.

So successful was the venture, the Cobbs bought a farm on the mainland where they grew vegetables and raised livestock to supply the resort's kitchen. And on a creek near Oyster they built a mill to grind meal and grain for use on the island. A chapel was built on the island, affording guests the opportunity for Sunday worship, and a Sunday school was begun for the children of guests.

Cobb's hotel register shows that between 1874 and 1882 visitors came from every state on the Atlantic coast except New Hampshire, and there were guests from Canada, France and England. The trip to the island was not an easy one. Usually visitors would sail across the Chesapeake to the landing on Cherrystone Creek on the western side of the peninsula where Cobb would arrange to have them met by a coach and driver. After a 10-mile trip across the peninsula, guests would board another boat for the trip to Cobb's Island. When the railroad came to the Eastern Shore in 1884, it made the resort more accessible to travelers, but by then both Nathan and his island resort were nearing the end of their lives.

The more adventurous travelers made the trip in their own boats, which entailed an often hazardous sail around the Virginia Capes, a 15-mile trip north on the open Atlantic, and then careful negotiation of the inlet and the meandering channel that lead to the dock at Cobb's resort. An account published in 1969 by the St. Mary's County (Maryland) Historical Society provides an interesting

narration of a trip taken by a group of young men from Leonardtown, Maryland to Cobb's Island around 1880.

In describing the trip down the Chesapeake from Leonardtown, author Joseph F. Morgan related numerous incidents of seasickness among the 18 men aboard the schooner *Father and Sons* but the trip was apparently otherwise uneventful. It was not until the company left the island a few days later that trouble struck. Sailing out of the treacherous inlet, the schooner ran aground on the shallow, and the captain, experienced though he was, could not locate the channel that lead to the ocean. So the group was forced to hire a pilot, a Mr. Richardson, to lead them out the inlet and south to the capes. The pilot took them on an inland route as far as



Magothy Bay, and explaining that navigation from there to the capes was easy, he left with a friend in a small boat. The group's attempts to navigate southward the following day were futile, and they were forced to spend the night on Smith's Island. The next morning the captain of the schooner met a local fisherman named John Half, a muscular young man given to crushing clams in his bare hands, who lead the group safely out of Magothy Bay and around the capes.

But soon after John Half left the schooner a fierce summer storm struck, and the boat and crew were battered by rain and strong winds. It took the sailors from the middle of the afternoon until late that night to reach the safety of Old Point Comfort in Hampton Roads, Morgan wrote.

Morgan described Cobb's Island and the surrounding waters as being rich with crabs, fish and waterfowl. The men divided into groups and were assigned tasks—gunning, fishing, crabbing, and shell and egg collecting—to replenish the ship's larder. After a day afield, Morgan says the men feasted on trout, clams,

oysters and mussels, and on willets and grey-backs the gunners had found easy targets along the beach.

At the time of their visit the hotel was apparently in a state of disrepair. "All the buildings," wrote Morgan, "seem to be neglected and undergoing decay. But one thing holds out, as of old, and that is the Bar Room. It seems that no matter what adversities overtake men or places, this institution is still in full blast. We patronized it pretty extensively, and should be excused, as the atmosphere of Cobb's Island leads to exhilaration."

**N**athan Cobb was in his eighties when Morgan and his friends visited, and although Morgan described him as having a clear mind and strong voice, Cobb was probably not able to maintain the hotel as he once did. According to Morgan's account, disagreements between Nathan and his heirs prevented judicious management of the resort. "We fear that there is a little too much contention between the parties in interest," Morgan wrote. "They should relinquish their claims to some company, for a limited number of years, receiving, of course, a share in the profits annually. Where people can't agree, someone should agree for them. Cobb's Island is a grand place, and should be the Summer Resort of the Atlantic Coast. With a little more concord, and with some outlay of money, there would be, in the language of Col. Sellers, millions in it."

But there were never millions in it. And the hotel seemed to grow old and weathered along with its founder. Nathan died in 1890 at the age of 92, and the hotel seemed to die with him. The year after his death a storm swept the island, inundating the buildings and causing severe erosion. The three brothers, perhaps feeling the onslaught of advancing years, decided to dissolve the partnership. Warren and Albert moved their families to the mainland; only Nathan Jr. and his wife Sally remained on the island, which became more dangerous with each northeast storm.

The end came on an October Sunday in 1896. A fierce storm gripped the island and the Coast Guard evacuated Nathan Jr. and Sally just before the ocean covered the island, destroying the hotel and clubhouse, washing the guest houses into the seas. Within 24 hours the hotel was destroyed, claimed by the same coastal storms that had brought the family to the island nearly three-quarters of a century before, then with the hope of salvaging booty from stricken ships. But the final storm claimed not only the Cobbs' hotel, it ended an era. And there was nothing this time for the Cobbs to salvage. □

# Growing Up Outdoors



## Apples, A Fall Favorite

by Sarah Bartenstein

Virginia is well known for its apples (we rank fifth in the nation in apple production), and there's something about autumn that makes apples taste even better than they usually do. Apple pies, apple cider, apple juice, applesauce and apple butter are some of the most popular ways we eat this fruit, and about half of Virginia's apple crop goes to produce these and other apple products. The other half is sold fresh—probably the best way to eat an apple!

Apples have been mentioned in many well-known stories. Probably the most famous is the Bible story about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As a matter of fact, apples are believed to have originated in that part of the world—southwest Asia—in which the Garden is supposed to have been, according to Biblical scholars. The fairy tale about Snow White tells of her wicked stepmother giving her a poisoned apple. "Atalanta and the Golden Apples" is the story of a young woman who ran a race against a man who wanted to marry her;

they had to collect three golden apples during the race. There are many other stories, myths and legends about apples. Can you think of any?

Apples are very nutritious. People and wildlife eat them. (Ask anyone who works in an apple orchard—apple growers often have problems with deer eating their fruit.)

Have you ever heard the expression, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away"? This probably came from King Solomon, who believed that the apple was a healing fruit.

There are many different kinds of apples; some grow in the summer, others in the fall and winter. These different varieties of apples have different uses; some are best for eating, others for cooking, others for salads. If you'd like to know more about apples, how to store them, how to choose a good apple, and more recipes than we have room for on this page, write to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, P.O. 1163, Richmond, Virginia 23209, or the Virginia State Apple Commission, P.O. Box 718, Staunton, Virginia 24401.

Here are some simple ways for you to prepare apples. Remember that you should not attempt any of these recipes unless an adult is there to help; the kitchen can be a dangerous place.

### Smiley Apple Sandwich

Core a Virginia apple all the way through to the blossom end. Slice apple crosswise into 1/4-inch rings. Spread apple ring with peanut butter and top with another ring. Cut apple sandwich in half into two smiley apple sandwiches.

### Surprise Lunch

Slice top off a Virginia apple. Core apple, leaving bottom of apple intact. Fill with a mixture of cream cheese or peanut butter combined with raisins and nuts. Replace top of apple and pack in plastic sandwich bag.

### Cidersicles

Fill small paper cups with apple cider and freeze partially. Insert a popsicle stick in each and freeze until firm. Peel away paper cup and enjoy a cool, natural snack.

### Applesauce

Wash, peel (if desired), core and quarter apples. Simmer, covered, in a small amount of water until tender. (Use just enough water to keep apples from scorching.) Press apples through a sieve or food mill. Sweeten sauce to taste (about 1/4 cup sugar to 4 medium apples). Also, if desired, add cinnamon, nutmeg or other spices to taste.

Recipes and illustration courtesy of Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

# Personalities

## Lt. Jesse K. Updike

by Francis N. Satterlee

Warren County, Virginia was the birthplace of Jesse Updike. His father was manager of an 1800-acre river bottom farm on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River and it was in this environment that young Jesse was reared.

He lived and worked on the farm until age 16 when his father became seriously ill, forcing Jesse to leave high school to seek employment. Following his father's death in 1951, he accepted a job in Washington, D.C. One year later he enlisted in the United States Air Force. This was during the Korean War, and following basic training Jesse was assigned to Taegue Air Base in Korea, where he worked as a heavy equipment mechanic. After being discharged in 1956, he returned to the Warren County area where he became engaged in a variety of different employment activities over a period of years.

A newspaper ad in 1962 seeking game wardens caught his eye. He applied and was accepted. Following schooling at the University of Richmond, he was assigned to the Goshen area of Rockbridge County. After a one-year stint as a trainee in that area, he was assigned to Rockingham County as a regular warden.

In 1963, he and Game Warden R.E. Wilfong were instrumental in establishing a hunter safety training course in the high school at Broadway, Virginia. That program was later expanded to include three additional county schools. The early effort has really paid off in that the programs are still in effect and to date more than 10,000 students have been trained.



In 1966, the Area Leader system was initiated and he was appointed in that capacity with responsibilities for the northern part of Rockingham, Page and Shenandoah Counties. In 1974 Jesse Updike was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant as Assistant Supervising Warden (Law) for the Thomas Jefferson District.

Jesse feels that the most rewarding

aspect of his job is stewardship of wildlife. "To be a part of maintaining this precious resource for the benefit of the generations to come is a source of great satisfaction to me."

He and his wife, the former Betty Mae Smith of Front Royal, have five sons, Teddy, Mark, Justin, Kevin and Curtis. The Updike family lives in Timberville. □

# Non-Game Update

## The Barred Owl

by Jeffrey M. Curtis

You may know him as the "hoot owl," but this common bird of evening haunts is properly known as the barred owl (*Strix varia*). Other nicknames include "eight hooter" and "barking owl." The former refers to the eight notes of the owl's call; the latter is owing to the sound of the call which, at a distance, can be difficult to distinguish from the sound of a barking dog.

A resident of swampy woodlands, this nocturnal predator takes full advantage of his environment. His diet is comprised of a wide variety of available staples and his nesting preferences allow him to utilize those abandoned by fellow raptors.

Nest examinations have revealed as diverse a diet as is found in any wild animal. Remnants of fish, rabbits, songbirds and even small owls have been reported. Other food relics have included frogs and other amphibians as well as reptiles and insects.

The large menu is readily available because of the ecologically rich surroundings in which the barred owl lives. Moist woodlands with mature, mast-producing trees are the preferred environs. These woodlands are usually near agricultural or urban areas. If a swamp or wetland is near, the presence of a barred owl or two is almost guaranteed.

The barred owl often shares his home area with the red-shouldered hawk. The hawk also prefers wet, swampy forests and preys on many of the same foods that his nocturnal neighbor does.

Yet there is little, if any, competition between the two because the hawk feeds during the day, the owl at night.

Preferred nesting sites of the barred owl are—like its food—those that are readily available, including tree cavities, snags, and the abandoned nests of hawks and crows. If a tree cavity is the choice, the owl doesn't bother with nesting material. The former nests of hawks and crows are recycled using green twigs, pine needles, leaves and leaf litter.



Leonard Lee Rue III

The hooting call of this large owl is often mistaken for that of the great horned owl. The deep, resonant bass of the larger great horned will not be mistaken after one has tried the art of owl hooting himself. A dependable and easily imitated series of eight notes characterizes the call of the barred owl. Some remember it as, "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all," but the series of notes more closely resembles, "Hoo-hoo-hoo-hooo...hoohoo-hoo-hooahhh," the "ahh" sound trailing off and fading.

Once you have heard the call a couple of times, you should recognize it easily, and you will likely be able to mimic it. In fact, the thrill of calling in barred owls is an often-used interpre-

tive activity among nature guides. It is not unusual to call in two or three of these owls at the same time—sometimes in the same tree.

The barred owl combines his hooting with a loud repertoire of laughing, crackling and whooping. A chatter of these unforgettable noises can liven up any evening, and many spring mornings, as well.

Commonly found throughout Virginia, this owl does not seclude himself to untouched woods but can be seen near cities and towns. The nearest park or campground will usually have a barred owl, as will most quiet, wooded areas near housing developments. He tolerates man with a complacent attitude and provides a unique and interesting evening melody. □

# Smallmouth Bass, --- **FALL STYLE**

Story and photos by Harry W. Murray

Don't hang up your tackle  
at the first crisp day of fall—  
the best is yet to come.



If I had to pick one season exclusively in which to do my smallmouth bass fishing in Virginia, it would be fall. Though the beautiful foliage on the mountains would be motivation enough to be on the streams at this time of the year, I have another reason. The fishing is fantastic.

The cool nights of September cause the water temperature of our rivers to drop rapidly. This must act as a signal to smallmouth, saying, get ready for the long cold winter ahead. Whatever the signals the bass receive, their action is positive. They go on a feeding spree unequalled in any other season. The bass are more than willing, and if we learn to play the game by their rules, the rewards can be tremendous.

There are many forms of angling which are productive at this time of the year, but I prefer to go after these smallmouth with a fly rod and artificial flies. During the fall, rivers are usually very low and clear. This is an ideal set-up for fly fishing.

One of the rules which governs our success is the spooky behavior of the fish brought on by this low, clear water. I firmly believe the main reason we often end the day with many junior-size smallmouth and so few large fish is that we spook the good fish before we get a good

chance at them. A four-pound smallmouth does not reach that size by being stupid. I have often had good smallmouth dart from an anticipated feeding station as I approached. Some of this is to be expected, but when it happens as I am sneaking in on my hands and knees before I can get within casting distance, I often feel the rules are one-sided.

Learning (however slowly) from experience, I have adopted several practices which help even the odds. I always try to wade upstream at this time of year. As an elderly fishing companion used to tell me, "They ain't got eyes in their tail." He seems to have gotten to the bottom line in a hurry, but he has a point. The smallmouth are practically always headed upstream into the current and as we approach them from below, they are less likely to become spooked. Another practice I try to use in the fall is fishing the broken water. I like to go in below heavy riffles and broken pocket water and work these areas very carefully. On some of Virginia's large rivers such as the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, I often spend several hours fishing across the whole river below one of these heavy riffles. The fast broken water helps hide the approach and the fish will often continue to feed actively even though you just caught one of their roommates not five feet away.

(Previous page) The author fly-fishing for bass. (Below) Fall, when rivers are usually low and clear, is an ideal time to use a fly-rod. (Right) Use a common-sense approach to fly selection: find out what the bass are eating by turning over a rock or two, and pulling up a handful of the vegetation, and inspecting them for such residents as hellgrammies and minnows.



It is not at all unusual to land 20 or 30 smallmouth in one of these riffles on the proper flies.

There is no magic involved in selecting the right flies to use in these situations. What is involved is a common-sense approach in evaluating the natural food available to the bass in these areas. Once you determine the main courses on his menu, it is only logical to attempt duplicating these in both fly appearance and action. If I am not familiar with the natural food on the river I am fishing, I investigate. Turning over a few rocks and pulling up a handful or two of aquatic grass will quickly give me the answers.

The main residents I find in these riffles throughout Virginia's smallmouth waters are hellgrammies, crawfish and sculpin minnows. This will vary from stream to stream and year to year, but it is wise to have a fly selection which will cover these three primary food types for fall fishing. There are many artificial flies on the market which imitate each of these food groups. In that you will be fishing these upstream, it is wise to select fly patterns which are constructed with soft, "buggie-looking" materials. The action of the stream currents on these materials makes the artificial look alive and appealing to the bass. Plastic and latex artificials do a poor job of duplicating this "live action" when fished upstream and they are only pass-

able when fished downstream. For instance, the fur hellgrammite I now use out-produces the moulded rubber imitation I used formerly by about five to one. This is just another of those odds I like to put on my side.

**O**nce you have satisfactorily selected flies which will fool smallmouth, the next step is to try to fish these in a convincing manner. Pick up a grapefruit-size rock, carefully turn it over and pick up one of the hellgrammies holding tightly to the underside. (Pick him up by the back of the head, because he can pinch.) Hold him gently for a minute or two until the water clears. Then select an area of average current for that part of the riffle which is about a foot deep. Drop the hellgrammite into the water and see how he reacts. In most cases he will swim downstream with an undulating action as he heads to the stream bottom. The distance which is required to reach the safety of the rocks on the stream bottom will be determined by the speed of the current. If the water is very fast he will drift-swim out of sight before he reaches the bottom.

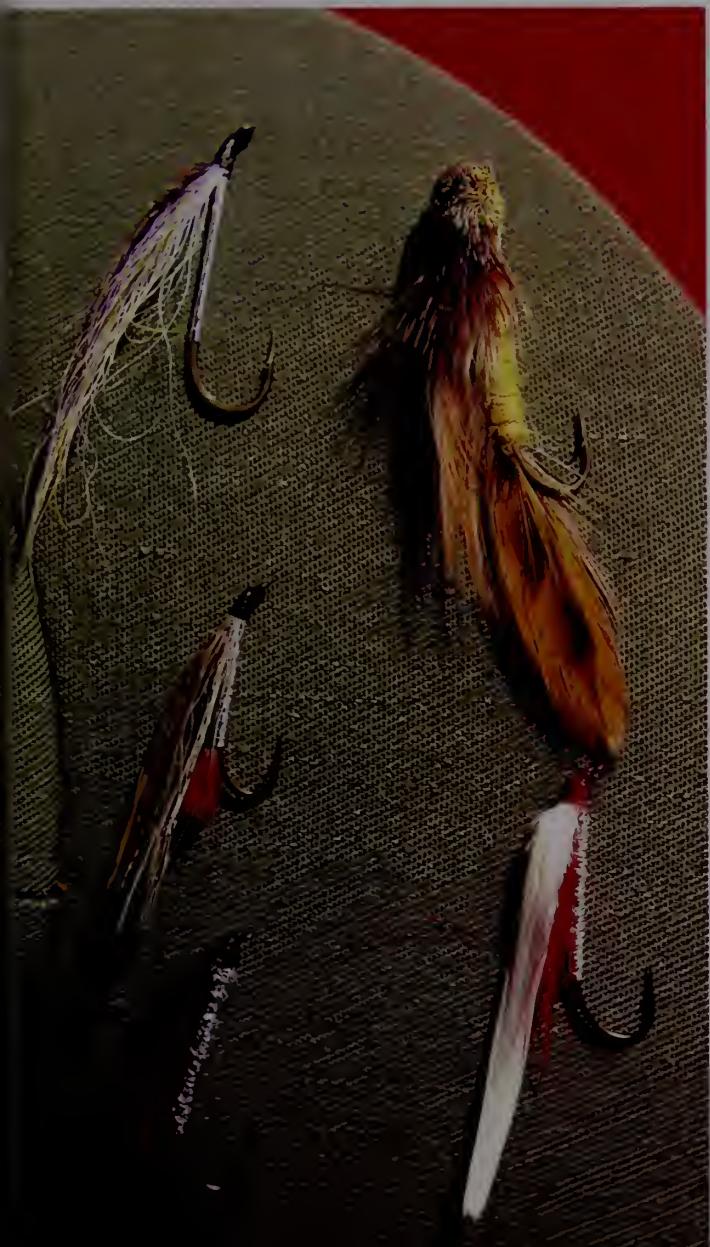
This is exactly what the bass sees when high water, bottom disturbances or just relocating on the part of the hellgrammite finds him even a few inches from the stream bottom. This is the action to duplicate with artificial hellgrammies. Cast them upstream into these riffles and let them drift back at approximately the same speed as the current. It is often a good idea to give them a very slight twitch as they drift back. This does two things: It conveys a life-like action to the fly and it enables you to more readily detect the strike as a bass picks up the fly.

The action of a natural crawfish can be analyzed in the same way. Actually, his actions are much like that of the hellgrammite, but being a stronger swimmer, he will get to the bottom more quickly. This strength also enables him to swim across the current much more efficiently than the hellgrammite. It is not unusual to see him spurt a foot to the right or left if he spots good cover. Note that he is usually quite close to the bottom and he is normally moving in reverse—tail first. So it is logical to strive to fish an artificial crawfish close to the stream bottom. An occasional six-inch stripping action in the retrieve may well bring a strike from a good smallmouth which sees this as a get-him-quick-before-he-gets-away situation.

The sculpin minnows found in these areas are even faster swimmers than the crawfish. If the crawfish spouts to get back to the stream bottom, the sculpin makes a crash dive. These minnows are seldom found more than an inch or two from the bottom but the bass love to eat them. In fishing a streamer imitation of this minnow, make every effort to keep the fly very close to the stream bottom. Using weighted flies, adding split shot to the leader and using a sink tip fly line are the three best means of achieving this. The darting action of the natural minnow is well matched with a short stripping retrieve of the streamer.

For this type of fishing, I am presently using a nine-foot graphite fly rod which balances with a number eight weight forward bass bug taper fly line. I prefer a floating fly line for most of this fishing but go to a sink tip line for some of the streamer action. Lightweight, single action fly reels are usually the first choice here. Considering the spooky nature of the bass in low water, it is wise to use a leader at least nine feet long. Normally, tippets of 2x or 3x will cover these needs.

This year, add to your enthusiasm for fall and its beauty with a successful day on one of Virginia's cool smallmouth bass streams. □



# Field Notes

by Lt. John Heslep

## Blaze Orange

(Below) Hunter not wearing blaze orange; note the difference in his visibility once he dons a blaze orange vest (below, right).



(Bottom center) This black and white photo of a hunter wearing blaze orange shows what the deer sees; although blaze orange makes him more visible to other hunters, he is still not highly visible to the deer.



**D**aybreak. A hunter hears a movement in the brush about 40 yards to his left. He very carefully raises his rifle to his shoulder. Turning slowly in the direction of the sound, he takes aim at an opening in the brush. As he eases off the safety on his rifle and prepares to squeeze the trigger, he spots the source of the sound. Lowering this rifle, he breathes a sigh of anguish and relief. In his sights is the bright blaze orange vest of another hunter. Score another victory for blaze orange.

Every year hunters find themselves in such situations. Unfortunately, they sometimes end in tragedy. A large number of the hunting accidents that occur in Virginia are caused by error in the hunter's judgement. These errors include the victim being mistaken for game; the victim being out of sight of the shooter; the hunter swinging to shoot at game and the victim moving into the line of fire. While blaze orange clothing would not eliminate all these accidents, there is no doubt that it would reduce their occurrence.

An average of 60 to 70 hunting accidents occur each year in Virginia; many of these occur during the hunt-



ing season. One reason for this may be that there are so many hunter afield at that time. Whether you are hunting deer with dogs east of the Blue Ridge or in a stand in the mountains, you are very likely to be surrounded by many other hunters. Anything you do to minimize your chances of being involved in a hunting accident is certainly worth the effort. Remember the proverb, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Studies have proven that most mammals, including deer, see the world in varying shades of gray. A deer's vision is geared to detecting motion. Its eyes are located on the sides of the skull, but are angled

slightly toward the nose. This allows a greater portion of vision in a complete circle. This eye placement, plus the large size of the eye, enable a deer to detect the slightest motion. It has also learned from its environment to distinguish between the sound of normal forest activity and the sound of human activity. Thus movement and sound are more noticeable to the deer than the color of the clothing you wear.

Although deer cannot see the brilliance of your blaze orange as other hunters do, it is more easily seen than camouflage cloth. This is because it creates a large expanse of one smooth, uninterrupted shade, unlike almost anything else in the forest. A hunter wearing blaze orange should pick a stand where the vegetation or landscape breaks up his silhouette. This will help make him less visible to the deer, but still provide the protection of blaze orange visibility to other hunters.

The voluntary use of blaze orange will provide the hunter with an additional margin of safety, without causing any serious disadvantages to having a successful hunting trip. Safety and success make a winning combination. □

# *Outdoor Notebook*

edited by Mel White



Spike Knuth



Francis N. Satterlee

## October Opening Set For Watchable Wild- life Area

Virginia's first attempt to bring people and wildlife together is well underway at Ragged Island. Workers at the Virginia Game Commission's management area at the Isle of Wight end of the James River Bridge are busy with equipment as parking lots and nature trails are carved through the pine highlands of this riverside marshland. The marsh itself now sports a twisting trail of wood, a walkway designed to bring people into the marsh without disturbing the wildlife. Remarkably, the walkway itself was constructed with little damage to the environment. Hardly more than the width of the wooden path itself was bothered by construction and, in many

places, the big cordgrass has resumed its growth under the path.

The walkway, self-guiding nature trails and their accompanying canoe routes are part of the Game Commission's new non-game management efforts. These efforts to bring people and wildlife together are funded by a state income tax check-off system which allows taxpayers to donate part of their income tax refund to the non-game wildlife fund. The fund is also being used to aid Virginia's several endangered species, including the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon.

The new facilities at Ragged Island, which is just across the James River from Newport News, are expected to be open to the public this month. □

## Stripers Caught in Lynchburg, A Headline for 1990

Stripers, sturgeon, shad and herring fishing in the James River at Lynchburg? If you say impossible, you're right, but 150 years ago, during their spring spawning migrations, such anadromous fishes were common in the Campbell-Nelson County area. According to a feasibility study recently completed for the Virginia General

Assembly, such fishes can migrate to the area again. The study was conducted by the fish division of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

To make such a possibility a reality, about \$250,000 will be needed to do fish passage design studies on five small dams in the Richmond area. If the General Assembly approves such funding during its 1984 session, the studies can be completed and available for further General Assembly action in 1986. Actual construction can begin in 1987 and anadromous fishes could be in Lynchburg in 1990.

An anadromous fish is one which spends most of its life in the ocean, but must come to freshwater to spawn. Several Atlantic coastal anadromous fishes, including those which have historically spawned in Virginia, are declining throughout their ranges. A successful fish passage program in the James River could assure such fishes' survival in the Chesapeake Bay and add significantly to their survival chances in the Atlantic Ocean. Such a program could also provide a totally new freshwater fishing experience for Virginians. □

## Walton League Aims at Wetlands

America is losing her wetlands at an alarming rate, according to Jack Lorenz, Director of the Izaak Walton League. Lorenz estimates that 40 percent of the nation's wetlands have been drained and says that experts estimate an additional 350,000 acres are destroyed each year.

For the sportsman, these losses translate directly into fewer ducks and geese as well as other animals and fishes who depend on wetlands for food and living space.

The league is asking for the help of the nation's sportsmen to reduce this serious loss of wetlands. Sportsmen who respond will receive an information packet on the values of the wetlands and what they can do to stem the losses. Write to the Izaak Walton League, 1701 N. Ft. Myer Drive, Suite 1100, Arlington, VA 22209. □

## Freddie R. Hottle '83 Warden of the Year

Executive Director Richard H. Cross, Jr. has announced the selection of Freddie R. Hottle, Virginia Game Warden for King George County, as Warden of the Year.

Hottle was recommended for the honor by his captain, Darrell Ferrell. Ferrell noted Hottle's outstanding arrest record, his cooperative attitude with his supervisors as well as his peers, and his public relations efforts on behalf of the Commission. Hottle has nursed several injured or abandoned wild animals for return to their natural habitat. He has also trained a tracking dog—at his own expense—which his supervisors expect to prove useful in future law enforcement efforts.

The Shenandoah County native has been with the Game Commission since May 1979, when he was assigned to King George County.

His selection as Warden of the Year entitles him to attend the annual meeting of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; this year, the meeting is scheduled for November and will take place in Asheville, North Carolina. □

## Industry, Conservationists Work to Improve Fishing

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) is working with industry representatives to support legislation providing tax incentives to industries that donate scrap materials, such as retired offshore oil platforms to build artificial reefs in fresh and salt waters. The artificial reefs attract and concentrate fish in areas where they are placed. Within the next 20 years, more than 3,400 oil and gas platforms in the Gulf of Mexico will be retired from production.

Under the NWF-supported legislation, they could be converted to fishing reefs for use by millions of anglers. The measure could also enhance fishing areas across the country by placing iron works in other coastal waters, the Great Lakes and many large reservoirs. The bill, introduced by Rep. John Breaux (D-LA), would require the National Marine Fisheries Service to consult with other federal and state agencies and private groups to develop a plan for locating, designing, constructing and monitoring the reefs. □

## Good Ideas From Operation Clean Water

The Virginia Division of Litter Control's Operation Clean Water is on the move to clean up what has become not only a visual blight but a potential hazard to wildlife and people. Trash is the last thing a sportsman wants to see in the water. Though most of us try to pick up what we can, here are some other good ideas from Litter Control for keeping water trash-free.

- Keep a box of "lawn-sized" plastic bags in your car, boat, and /or trailer for trash.
- If you own waterfront property, don't dispose of pruned tree limbs, or lumber from dock repairs in the water—even if it seems like a temporary erosion control method or "wildlife habitat." These can pose a serious threat to swimmers, waterskiers and boaters.
- Remember that there's something wrong with each of the following assumptions:  
"It's biodegradable."

(Do you want to come across someone else's apple core out there in the wilderness?)

"It's food for the animals. It will make a good hiding place for the animals."

(This isn't always true, and sometimes with the best intentions, humans can do real damage.)

"It's just a small piece of litter."

(Small shiny objects that shouldn't be swallowed attract wildlife.)

"I threw it away where it can't be seen."

(Where is away?) □

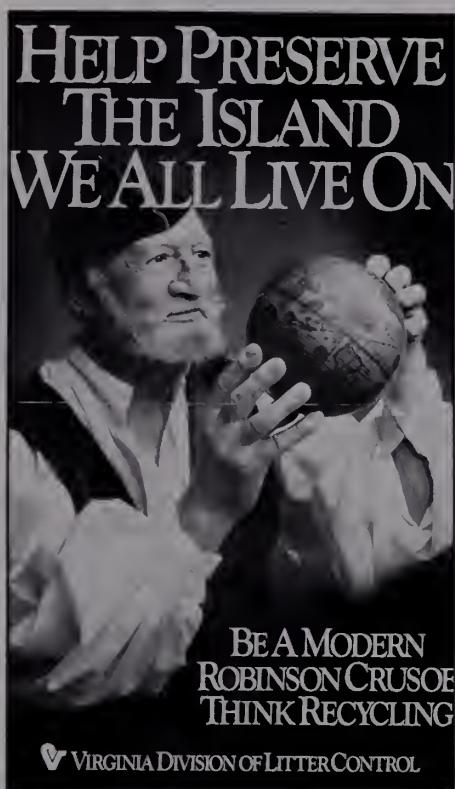
## October is Recycling Month

Governor Charles S. Robb has proclaimed the month of October as the Third Annual State Recycling Month in Virginia. Sponsored by the Virginia Division of Litter Control, this commemoration of recycling will inform citizens about the financial and environmental benefits of this expanding industry.

In the words of the Governor's proclamation, "The beauty of Virginia's countryside and her neighborhoods can be blighted by the careless disposal of various kinds of litter, many of which can be reclaimed, conserving both Virginia's appearance and her resources.

"To that end, the Virginia Division of Litter Control and many Virginia Industries join in setting aside the month of October as Virginia State Recycling Month, and I call the message it suggests to the attention of all Virginians."

Local litter control agencies statewide may be contacted for project ideas and locations of local recycling centers. The Division of Litter Control will award prizes donated by Virginia industries to school-age children partic-



ipating in a statewide "Outdo Robinson Crusoe and Win!" contest.

For further information, contact your local litter control group, or the Virginia Division of Litter Control, 1215 Washington Building, Richmond, Virginia 23219, (804) 786-8679. □

## Moving?

Don't forget to let us know!

Among all those details that you have to attend to when you're moving from one home to another, don't neglect to let *Virginia Wildlife* know your new address.

If you're moving soon (or have recently moved), please attach your most recent address label from *Virginia Wildlife* on the form below, and then write the new information in the blanks provided.

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| State       | Effective Date |     |  |

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## Subscribe Now!

# Game Law Digest 1983-84

## Here's your guide to seasons and bag limits for big game.

The numbing chill that attacked your boots earlier has given way to an almost warm sunrise and you begin to think about something other than the cold. You'd like to be thinking about that buck you're out here to shoot but all you've seen is a couple of squirrels playing around in the dry leaves. Your mind wanders. There's no one else out here; is the deer season really in? You look at your rifle, heavier now for having been held for two hours, and wonder if you're in a rifle county.

Hunting in the wrong place, outside the seasons, or with an illegal weapon can be an embarrassing and potentially costly situation. A *Summary of Virginia Game Laws* is available from your local license agent or by writing the Game Commission at Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230. When you obtain your game law summary, hang on to it! The hunting seasons and bag limits set this year are not scheduled to be changed until 1985. This year's summary is good for two hunting seasons, 1983 and 1984. The following is a brief outline of these hunting seasons.

## TURKEY

Turkeys are to be hunted with non-electric callers. Dogs and organized drives are prohibited in spring season.

1. *The first Monday in November through December 31. One per day, two per license year, either sex in the fall.* In Albemarle, Alleghany, Amelia, Amherst, Appomattox, Augusta, Bath, Bedford, Bland, Botetourt, Brunswick, Buckingham, Campbell, Caroline, Carroll, Charlotte, Clarke, Craig, Culpeper, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Essex, Fairfax, Fauquier, Floyd, Fluvanna, Franklin, Frederick, Grayson, Giles, Goochland, Greene, Halifax, Hanover, Henry, Highland, King & Queen, King William, Loudoun, Louisa, Lunenburg, Madison, Montgomery, Nelson, Nottoway, (except Ft. Pickett), Orange, Page, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Powhatan, Prince Edward, Prince William, Pulaski, Rappahannock, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Smyth, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Tazewell, Warren, Washington, and Wythe Counties (See Special Seasons for exceptions and on Ft. Pickett in the *Summary of Virginia Game Laws*).

2. *The first Monday in November and for eleven consecutive*

*hunting days. One per day, two per license year, either sex in the fall.* Charles City, Chesterfield, Greensville, Henrico, Lee, Mecklenburg, Middlesex, New Kent, Prince George, Russell, Scott, Sussex, Wise, and York Counties.

3. *Closed to fall turkey hunting.* In Accomack, Arlington, Buchanan, Dickenson, Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, King George, Lancaster, Mathews, Northampton, Northumberland, Richmond, Southampton, Surry, Westmoreland, and the Cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

**Spring Gobbler Season.** *Statewide from April 14 through May 12, 1984 and from April 13 through May 11, 1985. One half hour before sunrise until 11 a.m. each day.*

**Bag Limit:** One bearded bird per day, two per license year in all counties. Yearly bag limit to include fall and spring season combined.

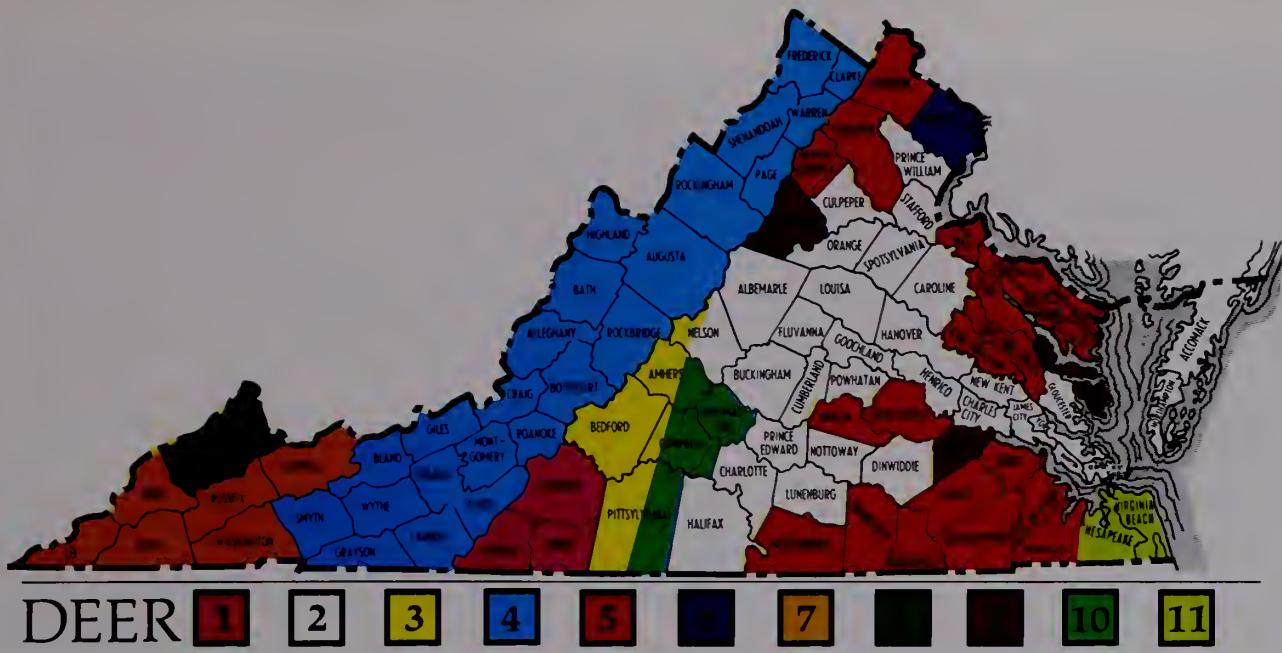
## BEAR

**Bag Limit:** One per license year, at least 100 pounds live weight or 75 pounds dressed weight (all entrails and internal organs removed). Females with cubs may not be killed.

1. *The fourth Monday in November through January 5.* In Albemarle, Alleghany, Amherst, Augusta, Bath, Bedford, Botetourt, Craig, Greene, Highland, Madison, Nelson, Page, Rappahannock, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah and Warren Counties. Dogs not permitted from the third Monday in November and for eleven consecutive hunting days; see "Hunting with Dogs" in the *Summary of Virginia Game Laws*.

2. *November 1 through January 5.* In Bland, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth\*, Tazewell\*, Washington\*, and Wythe (no dogs from the third Monday in November and for eleven consecutive hunting days). \*Except Clinch Mountain & Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area.

3. *Closed.* In Accomack, Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buchanan, Buckingham, Campbell, Caroline, Carroll, Charles City, Charlotte, Chesterfield, Clarke, Culpeper, Cumberland, Dickenson, Dinwiddie, Essex, Fairfax, Fauquier, Floyd, Fluvanna, Franklin, Frederick, Gloucester, Goochland, Greensville, Halifax, Hanover, Henrico, Henry, James City, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Lee, Loudoun, Louisa, Lunenburg, Mathews, Mecklenburg, Middlesex, New Kent, Northampton, Northumberland, Nottoway, Orange,



## DEER

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Patrick, Pittsylvania, Powhatan, Prince Edward, Prince George, Prince William, Richmond, Roanoke, Scott, Southampton, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Surry, Sussex, Westmoreland, Wise and York Counties, in the Cities of Hampton, Newport News, Virginia Beach and on the Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area in Washington County.

4. December 5 through December 17. Russell County and Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

5. October 1 through November 30. In the Cities of Chesapeake and Suffolk east of the Dismal Swamp line.

6. November 10 through January 5. In Isle of Wight County and the City of Suffolk west of the Dismal Swamp line.

## DEER

1. One per day, two per license year, either sex on the last two hunting days only. The third Monday in November and for eleven consecutive hunting days. In the Counties of Franklin (except on Philpott Reservoir), Henry (except on Fairystone Wildlife Management Area and Philpott Reservoir) and Patrick (except on Fairystone Park, Fairystone Wildlife Management Area and Philpott Reservoir).

2. One per day, two per license year, either sex on the last six hunting days only. The third Monday in November through January 5. In the Counties of Accomack (except on Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Parramore Island), Albemarle, Buckingham (except on Buckingham-Appomattox State Forest), Caroline (except on Fort A.P. Hill), Charles City, Charlotte, Culpeper, Cumberland (except on Cumberland State Forest), Dinwiddie (except Fort Pickett), Fluvanna, Gloucester, Goochland, Halifax, Hanover, Henrico, James City, Louisa, Lunenburg, Nelson (east of Rt. 151), New Kent, Northampton, Nottoway (except on Fort Pickett), Orange, Powhatan, Prince Edward (except on Prince Edward State Forest), Prince William (except on Harry Diamond Laboratory and Quantico Marine Reservation), Spotsylvania, Stafford (except on Quantico Marine Reservation), and York (except on Camp Peary, Cheatham Annex and Naval Weapons Station), in the Cities of Hampton (except on Langley Air Force Base) and Newport News (except on Fort Eustis).

3. One per day, two per license year, either sex last three hunting days only. The third Monday in November and for eleven consecutive hunting days. In the Counties of Amherst (west of Rt. 29), Bedford, Campbell (west of Southern Railroad), Nelson

(west of Route 151), and Pittsylvania (west of Southern Railroad).

4. One per day, two per license year, either sex the last day only. The third Monday in November and for eleven consecutive hunting days. In the Counties of Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Bland, Botetourt, Carroll, Clarke, Craig, Floyd, Frederick, Giles, Grayson, Highland, Montgomery, Page, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Smyth (except Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area), Warren and Wythe.

5. One per day, two per license year, either sex during the last twelve hunting days only. October 1 through November 30. Suffolk—east of the Dismal Swamp line (except in Dismal Swamp NWR). November 10 through January 5. In Isle of Wight and Suffolk west of the Dismal Swamp line. The third Monday in November through January 5. In Amelia, Brunswick, Chesterfield, Essex, Fauquier, Greensville, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Loudoun, Mecklenburg, Northumberland, Rappahannock, Richmond, Southampton, Surry, Sussex, Westmoreland.

6. One per day, two per license year, either sex. The third Monday in November through January 5. In the county of Fairfax, and on Parramore Island.

7. One per day, one per license year, bucks only. The third Monday in November and for eleven consecutive hunting days. In Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, Washington and Wise.

8. Season closed. It shall be unlawful to hunt deer at any time in the counties of Arlington, Buchanan, Dickenson and Fairfax\* (in that section closed to all hunting).

9. One per day, two per license year, either sex the last hunting day only. The third Monday in November through January 5. In the counties of Greene, Madison, Mathews, Middlesex, Prince George. (No dogs during the first 12 days in Madison and Greene).

10. One per day, two per license year, either sex on the last three hunting days. The third Monday in November through January 5. In Amherst (east of Rt. 29), Appomattox, Campbell (east of the Southern Railroad), Pittsylvania (east of the Southern Railroad), Fort Pickett and Fort A.P. Hill (non-impact area).

11. One per day, two per license year, either sex during last six hunting days only. October 1 through November 30, in Chesapeake and Virginia Beach (except Dismal Swamp NWR).

\*Hunting in Fairfax County restricted to certain parcels of land by police permit only.



# *Bird of the Month*

## The Eastern Bluebird

by John W. Taylor

**E**xquisite of plumage, of refined and gentle manner, the bluebird has deeply touched the human spirit. So much has it stirred our hearts that it has become a symbol of happiness, of joy and well-being.

Not that the bluebird is any "happier" than any other bird. It is the effect that such beauty has upon us. For the blue of the bird is indescribably lovely. A refractive hue (there is no blue pigment in any bird feather), it changes with the angle of light. Often it is the wings and tail that reflect the brightest, a glowing azure, while the back and head are deep ultramarine. Then, when the bird shifts position, it is the head and back that reflect the most intense color.

The burnt orange of the throat and breast does not change with the incidence of light. It glows with its own radiance, a soft earth color that complements perfectly the blue of the upper parts. This rusty hue blends into the whitish shade of the belly.

Color on the female does not have the same brilliance. The refractive blue is only on the wings, rump and tail, while a brownish suffusion dulls the head and back. And the color of her breast does not have the same rich sheen.

Equally appealing is the gentle character of the bluebird, expressed in its voice and grace of carriage. Both the call-notes and song are low-pitched, with a sweet, lilting quality. There is no sense of belligerence or ostentation, as some bird calls have, no high shrillness. The sound does not intrude upon the listener, but falls as softly as the breeze upon which it is carried. Even calls of alarm, given when the nest and young are threatened, are without a trace of harshness.

Most birds move about with a certain rhythm and grace, but this seems

especially so in the bluebird. There is no sudden dash for a passing insect, but an unhurried flutter of wings; no headlong drop on unexpecting prey, but a dainty hovering before settling into the grass.

With such qualities, one would think that the bluebird would have few enemies. In truth, it must contend with much adversity. There is intense competition for nesting sites, and birds wintering in the north face the constant threat of inclement weather. In the recent past, both factors have taken a heavy toll on bluebird populations.

Its tendency to linger in the northern parts of its range renders the bluebird vulnerable to snowstorms and ice-forming rainstorms. The latter are especially deadly, covering the bird's staple food supply at that season: berries and wild fruits. During the past few decades, bluebird numbers have been severely reduced at intervals by severe, unseasonable weather.

Within a few years, however, they seem to recover from such natural catastrophes. Not so resilient are they from repeated nesting failure. Competition for nesting cavities constitutes a far more serious threat. The spread of the introduced European starling, which has similar nesting requirements, brought the bluebird to a frightening low. Strong, powerful and aggressive, the starling readily drove the bluebird from favored nest holes, already in short supply because of increasing urbanization. Twenty years ago the bluebird had nearly disappeared from its former haunts. Bird censuses indicated a decline of nearly 90 percent.

The plight of the bluebird began to draw the attention of concerned individuals. They erected starling-proof

nest boxes (with a one-and-one-half-inch entrance hole) wherever property owners cooperated. The program met with unexpected success, and soon bird clubs and conservation groups joined the effort, constructing "bluebird trails," series of nesting boxes in ideal habitat. Most recently, federal and state agencies have provided their resources as well.

A prime impetus has been given to bluebird preservation by the North American Bluebird Society, founded in 1978. This organization publishes a journal, provides educational material, nesting boxes and plans for building them. Its 4,000 members attest to the popularity of the bluebird. Inquiries should be directed to the Society's headquarters at P.O. Box 6295, Silver Spring, Maryland 20906.

In Virginia, the bluebird is considered a permanent resident. Most likely, though, the same individuals are not present the year 'round. Banding returns indicate that many of our wintering birds nest farther to the north, most of them in New England. Those that nest in our latitudes drift south as colder weather approaches.

They return late in February or early in March, and immediately set to finding suitable nesting sites and establishing territorial rights. On the Coastal Plain, full clutches of eggs may be laid as early as March 15. Incubation begins later in the western part of the state. If matters work out well, two and possibly three broods are raised. Young have been found in the nest as late as September 23. □

*A full-color lithograph of Mr. Taylor's painting (500, signed and numbered, 17" x 23") is available from the artist. Write P.O. Box 158, Edgewater, Maryland 21037.*

